

Fact Sheet: Nursing Homes Surveillance Update: 1993-1999

Teens at Work: Injury Surveillance and Prevention Project

Occupational Health Surveillance Program

Bureau of Health Statistics, Research and Evaluation

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

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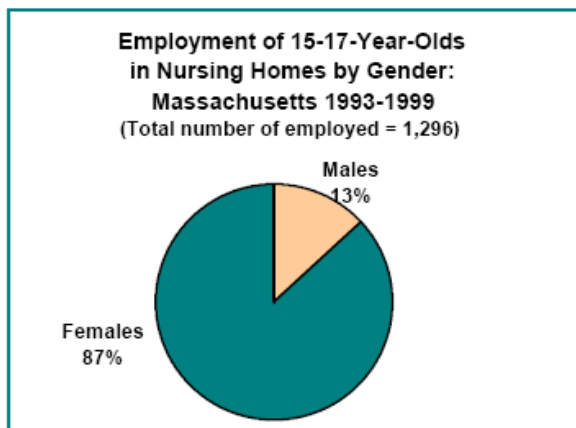
Background

Nursing homes are the tenth most common place of employment for Massachusetts teens. In 1996, the midpoint of the surveillance period, nearly 1,300 15-17-year-olds in Massachusetts worked in nursing homes. These teens represent 2% of all working 15-17-year-olds in Massachusetts. Nursing homes are the fourth most common place of occupational injury among teen workers in Massachusetts. Of the 3,389 injuries identified by the *Teens at Work Project* from 1993-1999, 5% occurred in nursing homes.

Gender

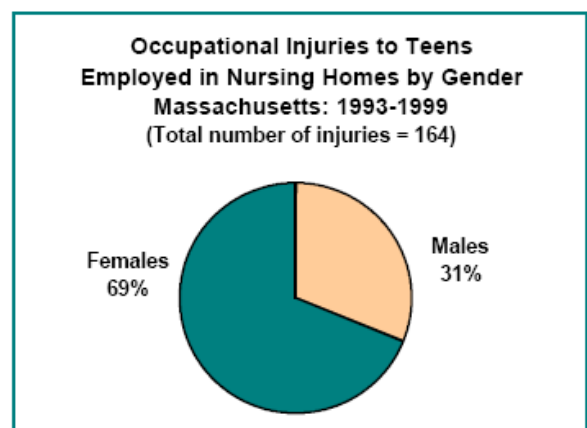
- Females comprised nearly 90% of the teen workforce in nursing homes during 1996 (**Figure 1**).
- Seventy percent of all injuries to teen workers in nursing homes occurred among females (**Figure 2**).
- While male workers only comprised 13% of the teen workforce in nursing homes, they sustained 31% of all injuries in nursing homes.
- Young males are at a higher risk of injury than young females working in nursing homes, based on employment percentages for 1996. The difference is likely explained, at least in part, by the assignment of males to higher risk jobs within nursing homes.

Figure 1.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics,
Current Population Survey: 1996

Figure 2.

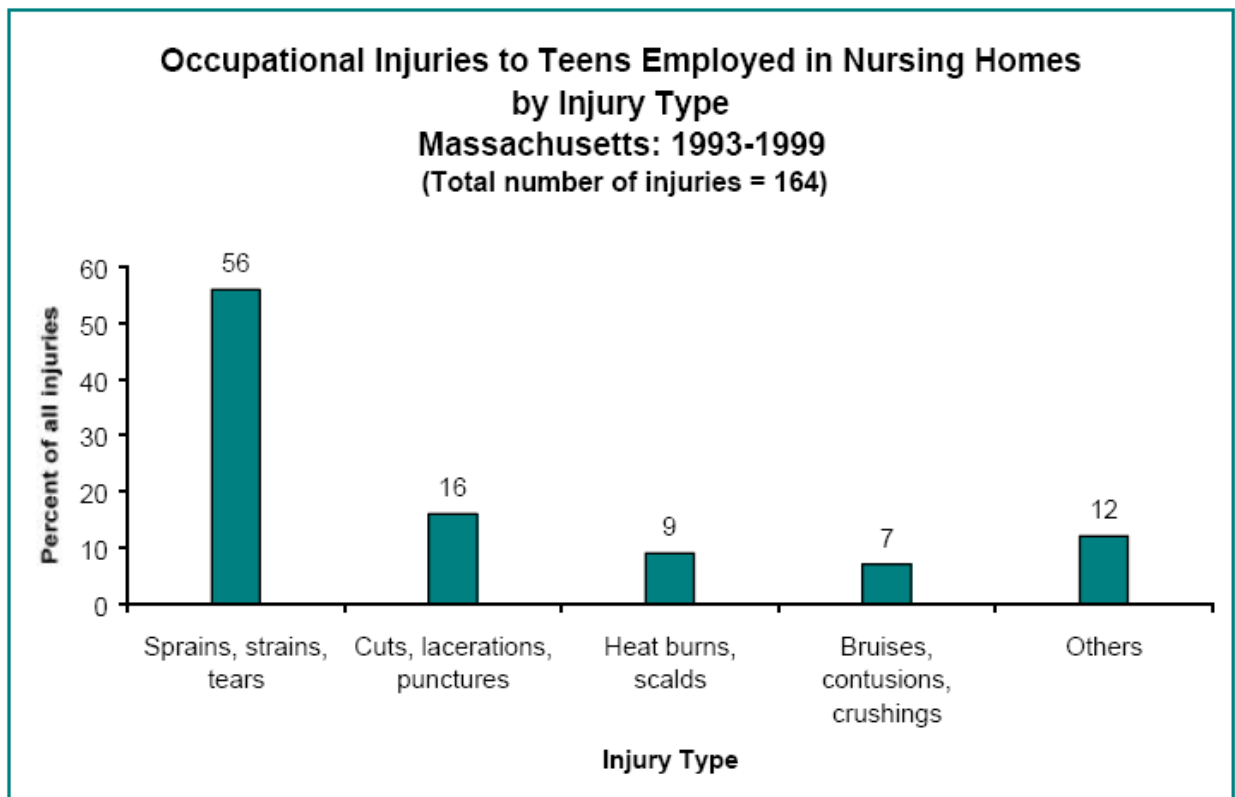


Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health
BHSR&E, OHSP

Injury Type

- Sprains, strains, and tears were the most common types of injuries sustained in nursing homes, accounting for more than half (56%) of all injuries to teen workers (**Figure 3**).
- The second most common types of injuries sustained in nursing homes were cuts, lacerations, and punctures (16%); followed by heat burns and scalds (9%).
- Cuts, lacerations, and punctures were the injuries reported most frequently by hospital emergency departments, whereas sprains, strains, and tears were the injuries most frequently identified through Workers' Compensation claims. If all hospital emergency departments in Massachusetts reported cases to the surveillance system, cuts, lacerations, and punctures would be more predominant.

Figure 3.

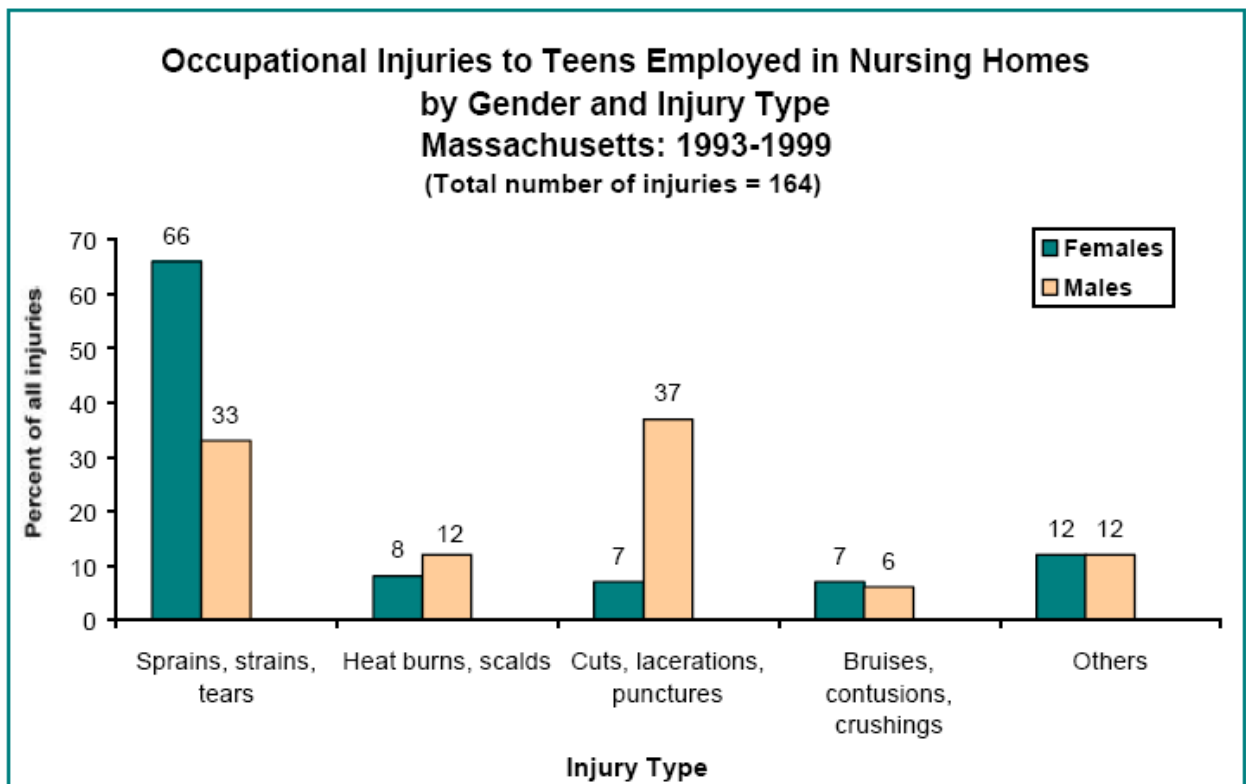


Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, BHSR&E, OHSP

Injury Type by Gender

- Injury type varied by gender for Massachusetts teens working in nursing homes. Sprains, strains, and tears were by far the most common types of injuries sustained by females (**Figure 4**). Two-thirds of all injuries to females were sprains, strains, and tears.
- Slightly more than one-third (37%) of all injuries to males were cuts, lacerations, and punctures. Another third of the injuries to males were sprains, strains, and tears.
- The occupations of injured teens differed by gender, which at least partly explains why males and females experienced different types of injuries. Among the males that were injured while working in nursing homes, 56% worked in health service occupations and 42% worked in food service occupations. Among injured females, 89% worked in health service occupations and only 6% worked in food service occupations.

Figure 4.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, BHSR&E, OHSP

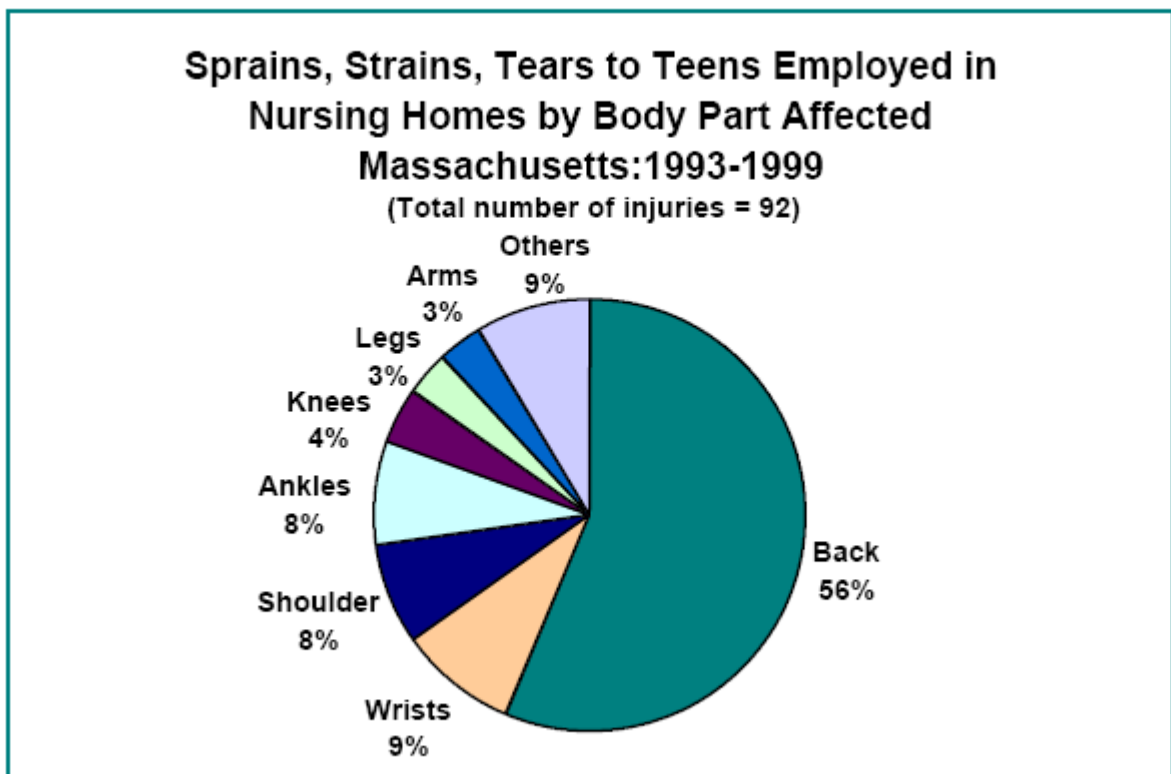
Sprains, Strains, and Tears

I was helping another aide lift a patient from a wheelchair to the bed. The patient was unsteady. When we lifted the patient, I felt a pull in my back. I felt more pain the next morning. I reported the injury to my supervisor the next day.

16-year-old nurses' aide

- The back was affected in more than half (56%) of all cases (**Figure 5**). Back injuries are of particular concern because workers with back injuries may be at increased risk for subsequent back injuries.
- One-fifth of all sprains, strains, and tears affected the upper extremities, including the wrists (9%), shoulders (8%), and arms (3%).
- The lower extremities, including the ankles (8%), knees (4%), and legs (3%) were affected in 15% of the cases.
- Descriptive information regarding injury circumstances was available for 89% of the cases. Lifting was listed as the cause of injury for 50% of these cases. Seventy-three percent of the teens were lifting, moving, or transferring a patient when the injury occurred. Slips and falls caused one-fifth of the injuries; wet floors caused nine of these injuries.

Figure 5.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, BHSR&E, OHSP

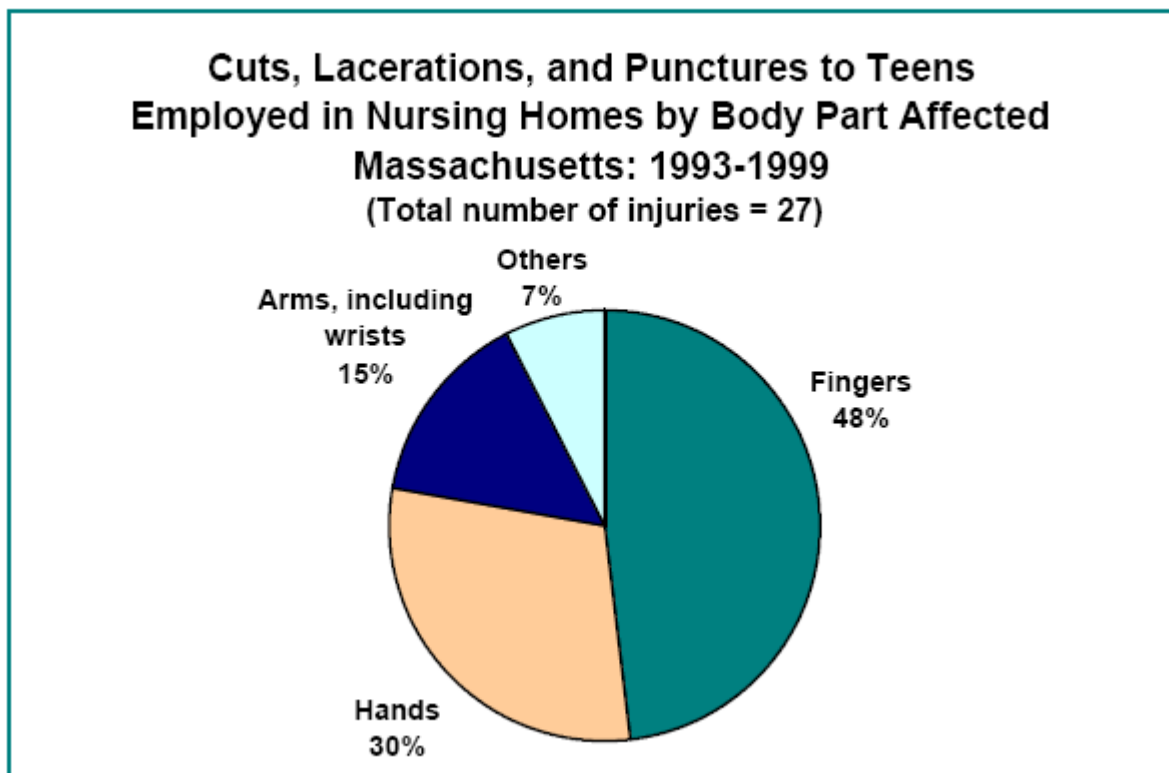
Cuts, Lacerations, and Punctures

I was working in the kitchen putting dishes away. I went to put a knife away. The knife holder is located on the wall behind the meat slicer. As I was pulling my arm back, I cut my arm on the blade of the meat slicer. The cover was not on the meat slicer. My manager was not around, so I went to the nurses' station and they bandaged my wound. Then I went to the hospital and got stitches.

17-year-old dietary aide

- Half of the cuts, lacerations, and punctures affected the fingers. The hands (30%) and arms were affected in 45% of the cases (**Figure 6**).
- Descriptive information regarding the cause of injury was available for 70% (19) of the cases. Broken dishes and glass were listed as the source of injury for 32% of these cases.

Figure 6.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, BHSR&E, OHSP

What Injured Teens Have to Say

Teens at Work Project staff completed phone interviews with 33 young nursing home workers injured on-the-job. While the information from these interviews is not necessarily representative of all young nursing home workers who have been injured, it nevertheless provides some important insights. Of these interviewed teens:

- Twenty-two percent reported they had received no on-the-job training about how to work safely and avoid injury.
- Twenty-two percent reported they had no work permits (or educational certificates) for their jobs at the time they were injured. *NOTE: Massachusetts child labor laws require permits or certificates which are obtained through the school district where the teen resides.*
- As a result of their injuries, teens reported their usual activities were curtailed an average of 24 days.
- Eighty-two percent believed their injuries were preventable.